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# Intercultural communication in an Organization HJEX

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## Intercultural communication in an Organization HJEX

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This thesis explores different ways of communication inside an organization and examines how cultural difference can affect various situations. The Thesis project was commissioned by the Finnish company "HJEX". The thesis investigates intercultural communication within an organization, focusing on identifying complications, outcomes and advantages of communication between people with different cultural backgrounds inside an organization.

Various methods were applied during the implementation of the thesis project. The findings and data were collected by communicating with the employees and employers of HJEX. Primary research was conducted through storytelling, survey and interviews. As people from around the globe migrate to different country for their betterment it is important for them to learn the language and culture of the respective country. Cultural isolation has become an alarming issue during the present time and this thesis focuses on different perspectives of intercultural communication, including how the foreign workers' communication styles and culture affects Finnish communication culture in the workplace.

The findings were compared to the theoretical context to identify the conflicts and gaps found during our research. The result led us to conclude that there is miscommunication because of cultural differences. It has often affected the productivity of company and end results. Further findings like being open minded, accepting and respecting cultures along with learning the language helps better integration in the Finnish working society.

Key words, row 54

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## 1 Introduction

Our main objective of thesis is to provide general insight regarding communication and the role it plays in society. It is more important when particular society/country is getting multi-lingual and multicultural. We will start our thesis by explaining the general phenomenon of communication and different form of communication. We will briefly explain about the history of Finland regarding the flow of immigrants/refugees. We will extend our work with the nature of Finnish people and their way of communicating through the landscape of business and social interactions. We will get deeper knowledge about modes of communication and its hierarchy through the readings of Trompeenar and Hofstede's books. Also it will help us to analyze the culture of Finland and help us to make comparison with other culture.

After finishing the theory part for our thesis, we will continue towards research part. We will conduct our interviews and survey in our case company. We will get more insight about difference between communication pattern of employees and employers. We will contrast the result and try to find the gap. Most of the employees in our case companies are from different nationalities and employer from Finish nationalities. It will help us more to find the similarities and difference between Finish culture and other culture and their way of communication. We will compare our results with literature and try to provide the suggestions and solutions for our case company which will help foreigners to adapt in Finnish workplace. It will also help Finnish employers to synchronize with workers other than Finnish nationalities.

## 2 Introduction of communication

Managing business or running a company requires balance of various sections of enterprises. Management of communication hierarchy needs to be taken care as well so that the flow of work inside business doesn't get hampered. There are different types of communications. It can be verbal and transparent while communications are made through electronically as well through means of fax, email etc. (Shanmuga 2011)

When it comes to business communication, communication is considered to be a form of art to share your ideas, to make your idea understandable to others or just to forward the plan to others. It plays a pivotal role to flourish the business. Without the proper communication between manager and employee it is not possible to come towards a mutual agreement and targets which any company aims for. Different forms of communication inside a business whether it is written, oral or expressed through the means of internet needs to be structured logically, contents should be up to the point and summarized in a right way. (Shanmuga 2011)

Organization consists of people from different culture and nationality these days. Selection of ambiguous and difficult words to express the ideas to employees can be useless. It needs to be simple and understandable by people of every culture. Expression and use of body language are inevitable parts of communication. Excess use of body parts while communicating and expressing the ideas in a wooden manner will slander the emotions and sensibilities of the whole audience. Subtle use of body parts, maintaining an eye contact with an audience, being polite will spread positive vibes among listener while expressing your ideas. (Mann 2011)

If the leader of team communicates persuasively and in a convincing manner, then it is easier for rest of the team to understand what is expected from them and how they can achieve it. It is also essential to make the listener feel valued and important during a speech. Interaction throughout communication makes the listener alert and it facilitates their strong participation. Usage of words, “we” during a speech through leader rather than “I” makes business communication more effective as it spreads the bonds of team work rather than working for someone’s personal achievement. (Shanmuga 2011)

Feedback plays a crucial role in communication. It makes communication meaningful and continuous. When some people express their ideas to others, their speeches are perceived and interpreted by listeners in their own way. Feedback makes the speaker know about how their idea is accepted as it all depends on the selection of their channel and medium to express it. Feedback can be a mere clap, gesture or smile. Feedback can be instantaneous or it can be delayed as well. It can be taken as a tool of measuring the acceptance and effectiveness of communication. Feedback creates a new way for the generation of new idea and alerts everyone in the future for the selection of channel and medium to communicate. (Mann 2011)

Business runs through selling products and services. To sell the products/services, they need to communicate with targeted people. It can either be done with one-way communication or through interactive communication. Usually big companies sell their products/services through the means of an advertisement. If the products/services are well received by customers, then there is positive word of mouth within the public. Word of mouth in general is a form of feedback and also means of communication from customers to clients. It tells the manufacturer how their products/services are being perceived in the market. (Mann 2011)

Communication is a daily use in every organization, where some has less interaction, while others has more. Working in a cultural environment, different cultural backgrounds determines the way someone speaks. Everyone may understand a speech differently despite saying the same sentence to each and every one. In culture, communication is a crucial part in or-

organizations to understand the fundamentals internally. Inside an organization there are policies, which everyone follows. For example, to follow the order of your boss. However, with different cultural background, even understanding some of the orders might be challenging. In some culture, people work spontaneously on their own. However, some cultures only do what is told and will not do more until told so. If these two cultures clash, where the organization wants the worker to work on their own without always telling the person to do their part, there has to be some kind of understanding between the two cultures. Culture differences in interpretation of others saying is one of the cultural communications. A way a person speaks; the other can interrupt what is said differently from another person. One may interpret that there is a hidden meaning towards the speech, while another might accept it as part of an information. Thus having a sort of understanding in culture can help organizations accept the differences between then the members and grant people to work together with fewer conflicts. Because each and every organization is different from each other, it is better not to assume that all cultural organizations can work similarly. Every organization is unique to each and every individual member of the organizations. This is why knowing some form of culture in an organization can be effective even if the culture can be positive or negative in the working environment. (Keyton 2011, 73-74)

## 2.1 Effects of communication in different communities

Every country around the globe are different. It also happens that different communities within single countries are different. Different forms of communities such as individualistic, collective, masculine, feminine has different norms and values. According to Hofstede, Feminine community comprise of large share of contribution from female gender socially and economically. Feminine community is full of tendency to nurture and to prioritize the relationship. While, Masculine community is based on will power, strength and ego enhancement. Strongest one mostly wins in many cases. (Hofstede 1991, 119)

The importance of communication is equally important in every community. People needs to be careful about the aspects of communication such as tone, body language, way of expressing etc. These factors play crucial role especially when someone is adjusting to a new place, country or community. Hofstede Stated that Western societies is mostly individualistic and feminine while Eastern and African societies are mostly collective and masculine. In the context of Finland, It is feminine and Individualistic. In Finnish communities, communication is always clear and all about direct confrontation for every situation. While, eastern and African communities tend to communicate without hurting other's feelings and harmonies are maintained. (Hofstede 1991, 112)



The recognition of labor market, war conflicts and educational purpose has made Finland open for foreigner. Within couple of decades, large number of foreigners can be seen here. Considering the fact that, it hasn't been a long time Finnish community has been exposed to outer world. Communication and its aspects are widely important to maintain harmony and peace. Huge number of foreigners here comes from masculine and collective community. Their way of communication is more expressive through their body while Finnish communication is more straight forward and polite. (Hofstede 1991, 83)

There is a huge risk of conflicts while people from different nationality merges into Finnish working life and are unaware of Finnish norms and values. Leadership from different nationality in Finnish working life can be taken as an example. Leadership from other nationality might be more commanding while Finnish leadership is more of clarity in conversation and tends to be full of nurture and emotions. Finnish people mostly communicate with less expression and more politeness while foreigners communicate more with body language and higher tones. These factors might lead to isolation for foreign communities. (Hofstede 1991, 86)

## 2.2 Finnish style of communication

It is important to know about the culture and communication style of Finnish people while doing business with Finns or while trying to adapt in Finnish labor market. Finnish people are generally shy and less talkative comparing to people with other nationalities. Swedish people are most shy in the eye of the world while Swedish people are talkative in the view of Finnish people. (Lewis 2011, 49)

According to Lewis, meetings for business or inside a workplaces are executed only when there is an immense need. Meetings can be completed only with speakers speaking and receivers' only listening. It is because Finnish people only speak when they have to speak while they prefer to remain silent throughout the whole other time. And when they speak they only speak briefly yet directly. But it doesn't imply that they have lack of interest or they are unwilling to participate. They respond only in appropriate time and they want to be heard at that time. They have strong desire of privacy and respect others 'privacy as well. (Lewis 2011, 47)

Lewis stated that communication patterns of Finnish people are more of silence and it has to be considered while making negotiations with them. Unlike other nationalities, Finnish people build the relationship slowly. The Finnish silence has a deep meaning to Finnish people. Finns culture respects the others communication and opinion in the communication yet can be silent through the whole conversation as it is part of politeness and to avoid any disrupt or dis-

cord in the people conversing. It is not Finnish nature to force people's opinion. Finns are considerate and do not make any abrupt decisions. It is also said that Finnish people are the best listeners as they do not interrupt. Finns may distrust people who converse fast and are talkative as they themselves are more conservative compared to other foreign ways of conversation. (Lewis 2011, 48)

### 3 Intercultural communication

#### 3.1 Introduction of Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is an important aspect of human society. Not a single country, even the one considered most powerful in political and economic aspect, can meet cultural and aesthetic requests and needs of humankind without applying to the world heritage, spiritual heritage, of other countries and peoples. Perfect harmony is created only when cultures meet. The modern world is progressing towards globalization. In this retrospect; issues about intercultural communication become an integral part both for mankind as well as individual. (Hofstede 1991, 67)

According to Hofstede, before getting into these issues, we need to understand the term "globalization". This term is perceived in many ways: "the unity of capital", "disappearing of borders between nations and increasing the international division of labor", "the similarity of values among different cultures", "everybody and everything together". Various studies suggest globalization as unity in economic, political and cultural aspects. Taking this into consideration, it can be concluded that international communication plays a great role on the process of globalization. In the most general sense international communication occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture. More precisely, international communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbols systems are distinct enough to alter the communication event. (Hofstede 1991, 68)

The world is full of people who think, feel and act differently. These people divide on various groups and nationalities for which it is important to be able to work and cooperate together despite all the differences in their way of thinking, because there are challenges and problems that go further national borders. There are plenty of issues such as organized crime, terrorism and economic crisis that are going on continuously. Cultural differences are part of the reason why some worldwide problems have yet to be solved (Hofstede, 2005, 2). When the stakes are high people cannot afford miscommunication due to the lack of intercultural understanding. Small issues such as interpreting an eye contact means are one sort of communication that has strong intercultural variation (Dana & Allen 2011, 13).

Effective intercultural communication is a must if one wants to have good beneficial relations with people from different countries. Hofstede (2005, 20) illustrates that it is not possible to suddenly import a new culture to a country and change the way people think, feel and act. Therefore, it is vital to have an understanding of how cultures communicate.

### 3.2 Barrier of intercultural communication

People from different cultures are not able to communicate with others due to various reasons. On this regard, dozens of studies have been conducted. One of the researchers into intercultural communication, Laray M. Barna (1997), has identified six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. These refer to the main causes of frustration and misunderstanding in intercultural encounters.

The first barrier to intercultural communication is assuming similarity instead of dissimilarity. When people are acting in a home manner in a different culture it might cause problems. In order to prepare yourself for various circumstances it is very important to assume laws, habits, and attitudes of another society. The reason for this assumption might also be our discomfort in dealing with difference. In any case, people have different assumptions and worldviews, in a multicultural society. Unless we are aware of these differences, we are certain to face difficulties in communicating with people from other cultures. The second and third stumbling blocks according to Barna are linguistic ones, in other words language differences and nonverbal misinterpretations (See also Jandt, 2001).

The fourth block is the preconceptions and stereotypes that we might hold. Samovar and Porter (1991) defines stereotypes are over generalized, second hand beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which we “make sense” out of what goes on around us, whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstance. Stereotypes are stumbling blocks for communicators because they interfere with objective viewing of stimuli. In other words, we have a certain stereotypical preconception of a person from a culture and we interpret his/her behavior according to this preconception, whether or not the reason for the behavior is what we think it is.

The fifth stumbling block is the tendency to evaluate. We tend to approve or disapprove the statements and actions of other person or group rather than to try to comprehend completely the thoughts and feelings expressed from the worldview of the other. This prevents the open-minded attention needed to look at the attitudes and behavioral patterns from the other’s point of view. Finally, the sixth block is called high anxiety or tension. It is also known as stress. Too much anxiety or tension requires some form of relief which too often comes in the form of defenses, such as the skewing of perceptions, withdrawal, or hostility. High anxiety often underlies and compounds the other stumbling blocks.

Because we learn to be members of our own culture, a phenomenon called ethnocentrism may result. Ethnocentric people tend to value their own culture above everything else and judge the others using one's own cultural criteria. To some extent, all the cultures are ethnocentric. This is natural, since people have been brought up thinking that their way is "the natural" way to do things. However, ethnocentrism can also lead to cultural misunderstandings if it is not recognized because it provides us with only limited choice of human thinking and behaving.

At the opposite direction from ethnocentrism is ethno relativism. Bennett (1986) has developed a model for development from one end of the continuum to the other. The core concept of this model is difference. We must recognize that cultural differences exist among people in order to move from ethnocentrism to ethno relativism. According to Bennett (1993), this happens in six stages, which are denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the first stage the assumption is that everyone in the world is the same as us. Characteristic for the second stage is the feeling of superiority of one culture over another. On the stage three differences are recognized but trivialized by assuming that basically all humans are alike. The fourth stage represents acceptance and respect for cultural differences. On the fifth stage this recognition turns into observable behavior. People show cultural empathy and pluralistic way of thought. On the final stage we not only adapt to cultural differences but enjoy experiencing such differences.

### 3.3 Intercultural sensitivity

As the topic says, intercultural sensitivity is about the sensitiveness in an intercultural context. It is about the valued interaction between people. People can be sensitive towards each other through many different ways, in communication, body language and action. All this sensitiveness in one person is related to culture and heritage. And, though, most companies are working in an intercultural environment there are intercultural sensitivity because employees and employers are from different backgrounds. As Cheng (2003) conveys Kirppendorff 1993 "cultural members acquire distinct beliefs, values and perceptions of meaning." (Page 1) With each distinct member having their own beliefs, value and understanding, not everyone are able to adapt the differences even when they might know each members culture and heritage. The differences may cause some misunderstandings in communication and behavior in both negative and positive way. A misunderstanding can also happen in a company and influence on the employer and employees work if the company is multicultural.

Having to understand two cultures is not an easy task while one only knows their own specific culture. Comparing two cultures, however, can show more in-depth of what intercultural sen-

sitivity means. In Hofstede's country comparison chart showing Hofstede's 6 dimension of cultural means, comparisons can be seen in three different cultural backgrounds. The chart shows the basis of cultural differences in business working but not directly towards sensitivity. However, while comparing the differences, the differences can be then related to the topic of sensitivity.

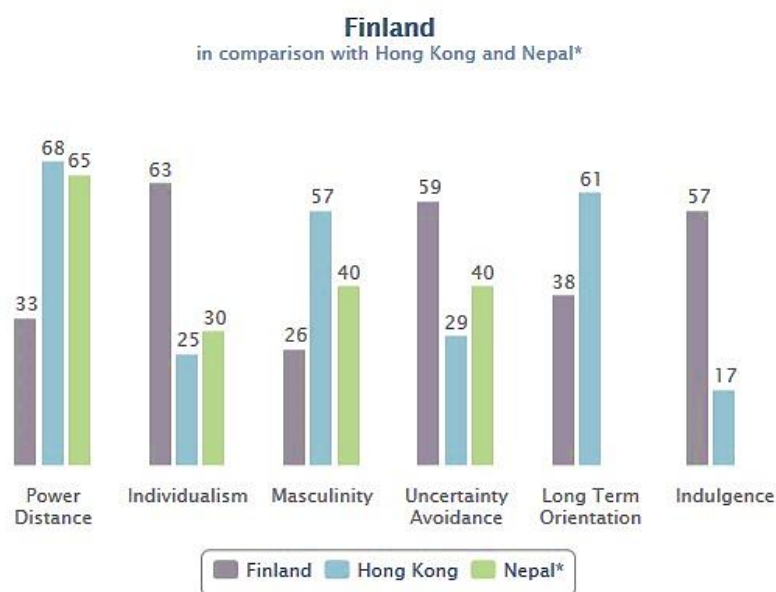


Figure 1: Hofstede's country comparison chart

The chart compares three different countries' culture. The major difference would be that western and eastern culture does have differences and that can impact the sensitivity towards each other. Especially in company multicultural working environment, different cultural employees and employers as well as customers may interpret each other differently in action, behavior and communication. Hofstede's chart helps us identify the differences between certain countries and also understand these countries business culture. In the east and west the power distance is a huge difference. And the difference can affect each person's sensitivity when working abroad or in a multicultural business. In Asian company's hierarchy is important while west, equality is what companies has. In hierarchical company, employees and employers are used to a certain culture where the higher ups commands and decides. This can affect person sensitivity by how they understand the other person.

Nakane (2007) discusses about silence and how it may influence an intercultural communication. Silence is one of the communications types. In Nakane's (2007) research, she mentions silence can be misunderstood and "interpreted as rude behavior." The sensitivity in communication is when someone feels that the other person is being rude in a way or certain through the behavior of the other person. Silence is one the behavior. For a person silence can be a

positive occurrence while another with different background it can be awkward or disrespect. In a funeral, silence is respect yet in the occasion if one is loud during the quiet moment, the person is disrespectful and rude. The person organizing the occasion would feel disrespected and their sensitivity is affected.

A person's sensitivity can also be affected by the people's "communicative style" as Scollon and Jones (2011) refers. How each person are names according to their status, gender and age, though how they are called are mostly interpreted though one's culture. We call a doctor by the title of doctor because of their high education as well as professors. Students call are teachers with formal titles such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., teacher or professor and last name because that's how students were taught. In Finland, however, the communication style is different and all teachers and professors are called by first names. Other teachers with different heritage and culture may misinterpret culture as rude and disrespectful without knowing the Finnish culture. The person would be sensitivity towards how the person should be called and the way they would be spoken. In China, Korea and Japan there is a formal and Informal way of speaking in their linguistics. So how a person should be referred and spoken to, is important. This would be the person sensitivity as how they feel comfortable in the spoken Language and culture.

#### 4 Immigrants and Refugees to Finnish culture

The sensitivity and barrier of communication can be linked with the refugees and immigrations. As these refugees and Immigrations come from different cultural background it has affected Finland historically and still affect Finnish companies culturally. Though refugees or asylum seekers are the ones who seek for help from other countries as they do not feel protected or feel threatened in their own country may affect the Finnish communication culture. Both refugees and immigrants work in Finland if they decide to stay in Finland. These factors affects the way of speech between the Finnish and foreign culture.

The case company of the thesis will be mentioned later and it is related to the foreign culture and the Finnish culture. Different culture has different ways of speech which affects the understanding and communication of two different culture. To understand why there are different cultures in work places, we would need to know the reasons from where and why the immigrants and refugees comes to Finland. Later in the thesis, there is a research conducted from the case company and there the results will show more about how the cultural differences affect the case company or if it has any affection.

## 4.1 Refugees in Finland

In the history of Finnish immigration and refugees, Finland has accepted people outside of its country due to various reasons. According to the chart on the right there has been applicants applying to get into Finland during 1990 to 1999. Each year has different amount of applicants but only some are approved. As in the chart shown, year 1991 and 1993 has to major permits granted, while other years' different amount of permits was granted. The chart shows, however, only Asylums application and decision. Each year there are immigrants and refugees applying for Finland but compared to other EU countries Finland has less applicants. From year 2006-2009 the amount of applicants has increased except year 2009 the applicants have decreased. The amount always depends on what is happening around us. This includes the wars in other countries has an impact on EU and Finland.

### Asylum applicants and decisions 1990-1999

#### Favourable decisions

Year	Applicants	A	B	C	D	Total
1990	2743	15		93	49	157
1991	2137	16		1684	19	1719
1992	3634	12	128	339	97	576
1993	2023	9	91	1952	30	2082
1994	839	15	30	247	24	316
1995	854	4	29	170	20	223
1996	711	11	16	305	13	345
1997	973	4	16	231	30	281
1998	1272	7	56	300	16	379
1999	3106	29	155	270	42	496

A Asylum  
 B Residence permit for need of protection  
 C Residence permit for a strong humanitarian reason  
 D Residence permit for other reasons

In 1990-91 group C also includes permits granted for the need of protection. In 1993 group C includes 1,614 permits granted under the Special act on the local police (14/93)

As from May 1, 1999 asylum applicants will not be granted residence permits for strong humanitarian reasons (Act on Amending the Aliens Act 537/1999)

Figure 2: Asylum chart

The recent wave of foreign migration was in 2015. From the statistics of Finland, in October 2015 10 777 asylum applicants applied to Finland. According to the chart of applicants received in Finland from 2012 to min of 2016, the amount of seekers was huge compared to year 2012 to the beginning of 2015. The cause of this refugee waves was from the country of Syria, where refugees went Europe to seek for help.

### Asylum applications received in Finland

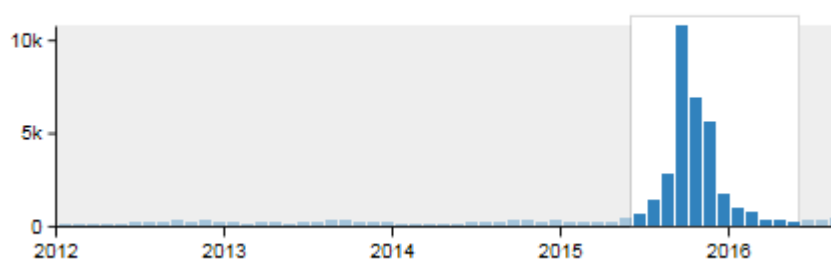


Figure 3: Asylums Applicants in Finland 2012-2016

## 4.2 History and significance of immigrants in Finland

It's not been a long time Finland has been familiar to immigrants or refugee. People from different country migrated or looked for safer place to move such as US or many different European countries. There were significant numbers of different European workers and managers for businesses in Finland before independence. The numbers were drastically decreased and went almost to none after world wars. Finnish people rarely encountered immigrants or international labor market as they had adequate number of labor. After many years' people were brought mainly from neighbor country Estonia to fill the number of short term workers. That too was significantly decreased as unemployment rate in Finland drastically increased. The issues of organized labor market were scrapped from parliaments and things did change rapidly. (History of immigration 2015)

During the era of early 90s, people didn't come to Finland for educational needs or occupational purpose. The collapse of Soviet Union led to higher number of asylum seekers and their families who wanted to reunite. The main focus between those times was humanitarian help rather than labor market. In 1990 percentage of unemployment rate in Finland was 3.6 which drastically increased within the span of four years and it was 16.6% in 1994. The percentage of unemployment rate in Finland was highest within European countries. (History of immigration 2015)

Finnish government realized the needs of labor market during 2000s through demographic predictions. The number of people working in Finland and those who are able to work are relatively smaller compared to the needs of market. Thus, it made them to reconsider about the immigration policies. Occupational policy in Finland was to be changed from passive to active during 2006. Economic recessions during 2008 slowed down the policy for immigrants and no plans were stored for future. Next government of Finland between 2011 and 2014 didn't have any policy of increasing the number of occupational immigrants but to settle down those who were already residing in Finland. There have not been enough studies and investigations to find out the consequence of labor market in future and immigrations. (History of immigration 2015)



## 5 Company Business Background

### HJEX

Helsinki Jakelu-Expert Oy for short is HJEX and is part of the SSM Suomen Suoramainonta - chain. HJEX was established in 1979 as a specialized company in advertising and distribution. HJEX started off in Helsinki town, Hermanni, as newspaper distribution and advertisement. Several years later they expanded the working area. The territory of advertising and distribution went to all of Helsinki, and the metropolitan area Espoo, Kauniainen and Vantaa, as well as to Kirkkonummi, which is right outside of the metropolitan area. HJEX main purpose is to distribute all kinds of newspapers, advertisement and distributable items to all of their customers.

HJEX working system is an environmentally friendly business. Worker distribute to the customers in an environmentally friendly way, which is either by foot or by bicycling. Their priority is to recycle paper and value the equality of the staff's working environment. HJEX also prioritize the reliability and flexibility to customers, partners and staff.

SSM is the main chain of which HJEX is part of. SSM is a private company, which distributes to 2.1 million households twice a week, Wednesdays and weekends. While HJEX focuses on Helsinki metropolitan area, SSM distributes to whole country of Finland. SSM distributes regional newspapers and cities' own area for example Leppävaara, Kamppi, Tikkurila's own newspapers. SSM also distributes advertisements, catalogues, magazines and other news, which is the same as HJEX. While HJEX distribution area is focused, SSM also has their work stations all around Finland with different branch names. Each branch has their own area of distributional work. The main office is, however, located in Helsinki.

## 6 Research and methodology

### 6.1 Introduction to research

In this thesis, we conducted our research of HJEX. HJEX has multicultural employees, where we are able to investigate and analyze the communication differences between culture. The methods we used to conduct the research was observation, interview, survey and storyboard/narratives. Through these methods we hope to find some answers to possible conflicts that we might find during our analysis.

## 6.2 Observation

Observation is one of the service design tools for research and methodology. It is a way to see the service and product by a third person. Observation can also be linked to shadowing by observing a person action and behavior with the service or product. Observation tool method is to try and identify some findings. These findings can be either positive or negative depending on the product or service. Through shadowing researchers may observe situations, where an incident might happen that normally has not been encountered, or even encounter the problem of the service or product. Observation is one way to enhance the service environment or product as well as solving a better solution to develop a service or product through the actions of both staff and customers' interaction. (Schneider 2010)

However, Sanger (1996), describes observation as something else than just seeing. Seeing the surrounding might just be looking at the area without any further inspection about the area thus there will be no particular information. Observation, however, makes one aware of the surround including the structure and people nearby. Plans are made for the purpose of the service and product, when observing. With it, we also collect data for research in our field. Yet Sanger (1996) mentions that when observing one should use new eyes in the environment where the research is taken place. "The major difference between seeing and observation is that the observer takes steps to counteract the in-built biases we all possess," as Sanger (1996) explains, "the methods we use to counteract our biases are the instruments of observation." In an everyday life we even as researchers and observers may be blinded by the daily actions and expression including the surroundings. In order to develop a service or product, we have to also understand the human behavior and action. In the study of observation, we can identify the meaning through the action and behavior of people while interacting with the service or product with an unbiased way of thinking.

With observation in intercultural context perception on human behavior and action, with different cultural background has to be taken into account. Different cultural background will perceive the service or product differently. While observing the situation with different cultural background, researchers would need to be unbiased to get deeper understanding, which is converted into information. Also understanding the different culture and heritage every person has, observation can see more problems connecting to the service or product. To be able to research and observe without raising further problems, note taking and recording was recommended by Sanger (1996), as well as finding evidence related to the data that is collected for the development of the research field.

### 6.3 Interview

One of the interviewed person is an employer of HJEX, Olli Laaksonen from Finland. He has worked for about 11 years in the company at first an employee as a distributor and later gotten the place of employer in the distribution department. He knows the Finnish language fluently and has studied basics of English and Swedish. He communicated with his Finnish colleagues in Finnish and his employees in English. During the interview we ask several basic questions about Olli and questions from Olli relating to the company and communication. During the interview, we asked about his conflicts, experiences, weaknesses and strengths. Through interview we can get more in-depth sights of any possible conflicts and solutions.

### 6.4 Survey

Survey is one of the method used for the researched. There are different types of surveys and for this research we used 15 questions, where participants answer from the rate of 1-9. The questions used in the survey were all related to communication. Some of the question ask in the survey are “Nationality of other person affects my level of comfortability in communication,” “learning Finnish language strongly helps to adapt smoothly in your workplace,” “I am really straight forward” and “I am able to know if people get understood/misunderstood by my speech.”

In the survey given to staff of HJEX, gender and age were asked as well as if the participant is an employee or employer. These for details gotten from the staffs can help us later differentiate between different groups such as different age groups and the difference between employee and employer.

Participants are given a chance to rate their own experience and opinion of the question from 1 to 15. The rate option is from 1 to 9, where 1 is strongly disagree and 9 strongly agree. Participants were given an option to provide an explanation or reason for their answers in the corresponding question if needed.

Researchers use a variety of different methods (surveys, interviews, and experiments, databases) to gather empirical data. Cross tabulation is a statistical method of combining statistical data into a form that is very easy to analyze. Cross tabulation is done by taking a categorical data and then condensing into something like a table. In the end by doing so, categorical data or non-numeric data is converted into something numeric. In simple words cross tabulation is a way of turning non numeric data into numerical data for the sole purpose of a research. (White & Korotayev 2004)

### 6.4.1 Cross Tabulation

Cross tabulation of qualitative data is a basic tool for empirical research. Cross tabulation is also known as cross tabs and generally used as a since it's much shorter to use. Cross tabs are also called contingency tables because they are used to test hypotheses about how some variables are contingent upon others and how increases in one affects increases, decreases or curvilinear changes in others. Contingency analysis is also a good place to begin testing theories or developing hypotheses to be tested with more rigorous collected data. (White & Korotayev 2004)

Whereas frequency tables display a summary of distribution of a single variable, cross tabs display a summary of the distribution of two or more variables. The difference is that cross-tabs allow observing how the frequency distribution of one variable relates to that of one or more variables. It tabulates the frequency by the categories or class intervals of the variables being compared. Cross-tabs can include any combination of nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio variables. (White & Korotayev 2004)

Cross-tabs can be understood easily by a simple example. A simple survey was conducted with a variable: Have you ever had a drink?

Table 1 Cross Tabulation Example

		Male	Female	Total
Drank alcohol before?	Yes	806 (36.7%)	1392(63.3%)	2198
	No	303	703	1006
Total		1109	2095	3204

In a simple frequency table, we could see one variable with yes/no or male/female frequencies, with the use of cross tabs we can see the totals plus the breakdown of numbers by the categories Yes/no and male/female. Cross-tabs can also be interpreted by percentages as shown in this example. There were 36.7% of male whereas 63.3% who were females. (White & Korotayev 2004)

Cross-tabs makes it possible for wider interpretation of single set of data with more descriptive such as percentages and many more including charts and figures for better understanding of empirical data.

## 6.5 Narrative/Storytelling/Storyboard

Storyboard can be defined as a tool a user or story teller can use to communicate their experience in using product or service. This method was initially used in movie industries, which was introduced during 1930s by Walt Disney studio. Later, this methodology has been popular for communicating the experiences that a user gains from product or service by explaining the touch points. (Business Design Tools, 2011)

In other words, storyboards help to provide the visual or primary element for communicating the experiences oneself as well as others. So, storyboard is considered as powerful tool to share a story of user journey and concept with clients and customer and make them understand design ideas and decisions. Storyboard can be used during service design workshop to gather feedback and recognize missing elements or factors needed to be improved. Storyboard is that quick prototype of experience which helps company to improve relation with their customer. The storyboard helps user to recall and express experiences that they have during their journey to product or service. (Business Design Tools, 2011)

To sum up, use of storyboard to describe an experience can be an easy method to conceptualize the process taking an idea from its intellectual form into real form and enhance the identity and productivity of service by bringing a vision to a life in a way that anyone can grasp and engage with. (Business Design Tools, 2011)

## 7 The result of interview and surveys

### 7.1 Interview of Olli Laaksonen

Interview of Olli Laaksonen, a manager of HJEX, gave us more details of the company and the communication in the business. In the Interview Olli mentioned about the struggle at first when he was the manager of his department. We asked if he had any experience from abroad of different cultural background. Olli replies us, "No, I haven't worked in different country but of course I have managed many people from another culture in this company." We asked further about his cultural experiences. "I have learned from the guys you are working for me," he told us his staffs from multicultural background.

His struggle was mostly of employees who came from different nationality and has a different working culture. The working culture tends to conflict the Finnish way of work and has cause problems to the employer and employee. Olli told us that there were situations where the worker has send their friends to work instead of themselves. These situations, however, has

given Olli experience of other working culture from different countries through the employees.

Throughout the years Olli has been working in HJEX, He has gradually learned to speak English more comfortably from constant speaking to the staff and as part of his job. He told us in his interview: “I speak and write it (English) so much.” and “because from the warehouse all are speaking English” so English became his everyday language at work. He still uses Finnish language with his Finnish Colleagues. His improvement in English also lifted the barrier of communication with him and the staffs. He has gotten used to different types of accents and dialects of English language. We asked if he has had any difficulty sometimes communicating with his employees. “Not anymore, we try to speak face to face and if not, then just send Sms (text message).” Olli also mentions at the end of the interview that HJEX has started offering Finnish language courses to their employees. It is to give the staff chances to learn the language. Yet there is no particular goal in this offer, the business will see in the future of how the courses will affect HJEX.

## 7.2 Interview of Aari Ukkonen

In this interview we asked Aari of his working experience in a different country/culture, to which he replied of his few months of working in Germany as a construction worker during his youth. We further asked him the “differences in the working culture” to which he replied that he did not find much of differences at least between Germany and here because they are almost all basically the same. He also further added that in his opinion “working culture is usually the same in and around western Europe and northern Europe”. We also further asked him in another question about “a working culture from another country that fascinates you” to which his instant reply was Germany, given his few months of working there. Aari briefly said that there are no problems adjusting in the working culture. There is a working shift and a simple objective that the work needs to be completed within a timeframe.

In one of the question we asked about languages he used to which he said that conversations tend to be much shorter when he spoke English but can be a little longer if he used his native language i.e. Finnish. “I travel a lot and hence the ultimate need to use English as a basic language for communication”. Also since “I am a supervisor that handle all work shifts for employees who speak English as the basic language, it getting much easier”. Also he further added that sometimes he tends to forget basic Finnish words and remembers the English ones, though.

During his earlier days as a supervisor he did face problems because of language barrier especially because all employees do speak English but have different ascents. Over the years he has adjusted to the various ascents and this makes it much easier to handle situations. We further asked him the benefits of intercultural communication, to which he replied “intercul-

tural communication helps create greater understanding and because of globalization it creates greater awareness.

In the last question we asked him about plans that I being implemented to overcome intercultural communication to which he replied that “the company is trying to implement a language class that helps workers to understand the basic language that can be used at work and help integrate better to Finnish society”. “The plans are being made and will take a little further time to implement since the management is finalizing it soon”.

## 7.2 Cross Tabulation Results of employee and employer

The aim of this research is to find the different aspect of communication and between different groups i.e. Employee vs. Employer and Below 25 age groups and Above 25 age groups. The result is entirely based on their preferences for our survey questionnaire. The total amount of questions was 15 with a normal rating from 1-9 which indicates agreement level for the following statement. The total numbers of participants in our survey are 40 people. We divided our whole survey results two times based on the different groups. The main reason for this was to find the gap between the pattern and way of communications between these groups. All of the employers here for our surveys are from Finnish nationality. While all employee participants in our survey are from foreign nationality especially from Asia and Africa.

Question number 1 and question number 8 are as follows:

Question 1. Nationality of other persons affects my level of comfortability in communication.

Question 8. I am only comfortable while communicating with people of my own nationality.

Through the survey analysis we found that a small percentage of both employee and employer feel that “Nationality of other person affects the level of comfortability in their communication”. Among the data, more of the employer agrees with the statement. This leads us to the fact that “Finnish people prefers to be in their own space and generally shy”. Most of the Finnish people have an adequate knowledge of other languages besides Finnish but they are self-depreciating and hesitant to speak. It is because of the shyness and fear that they might make some error. Higher percentage of agreement with the statement doesn’t necessarily mean that they are rude or they completely want to avoid the confrontation. It generally means they are shy and wants to avoid if it is not needed. (Snyder, 31)

In order to obtain the better results, we had similar kind of questions with a bit of twist in it. Another similar question is as follows, “I am only comfortable while communicating with people of my own nationality.” The main reason for it was to find the reliable and valid findings.

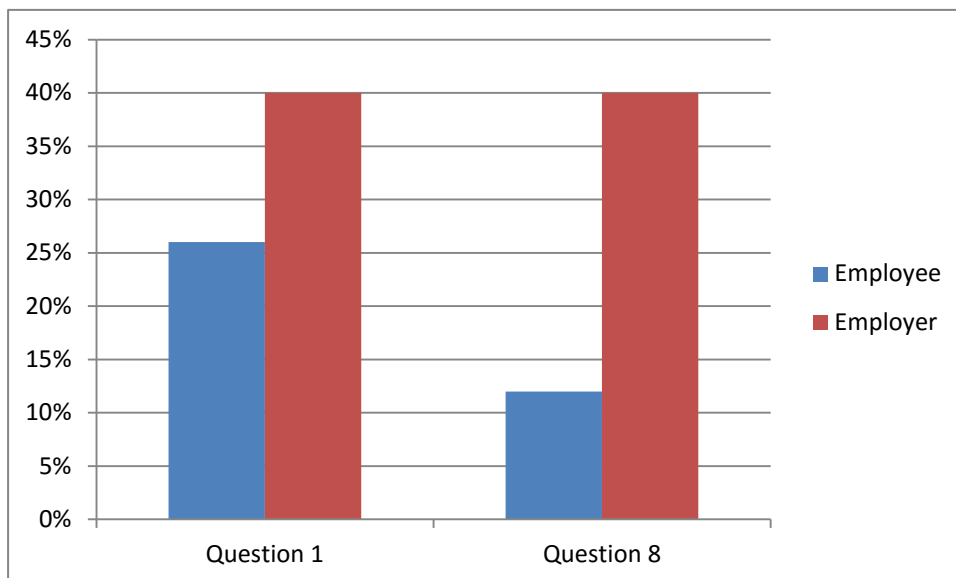


Figure 4: Question 1. Nationality of other persons affects my level of comfortability in communication. Question 8. I am only comfortable while communicating with people of my own nationality.

Both results showed us that Finnish employer in HJEX are more silent with foreigners comparing to the Finnish counterparts. They prefer to have a conversation with their employee in utter needs only. Whereas majority of the employees enjoy the company of any nationality and are willing to talk and communicate. It actually helps the company to bring harmony in workplace as employees are more open and good communication always helps to create a bond between people. New recruitment can find the help from experienced employees and it increases the productivity.

Through this result below, we can see that almost 80% of the foreign people or employees in HJEX believes that pitch of voice should be considered while talking. While half number of the employer believes that pitch of voice is not important while talking.

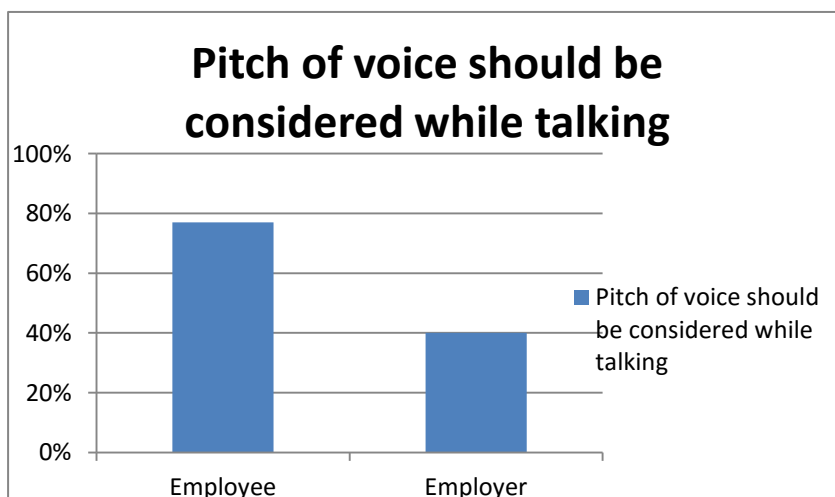


Figure 5: Pitch of voice should be considered while talking



Finnish people are generally monotonic. They prefer to maintain the same level of pitch throughout the whole conversation. Finns normally shake hands while meeting and communicates in a softer tone. It is perfectly normal for Finns to have awkward silence during the conversation. Actually they prefer to communicate via e-mails and phones than meeting in persons. Employers in HJEX are mostly from Asian and African background. They are generally expressive through their body and pitch of voice. During the observation we have encountered that employees have a higher pitch of voice when they disagree with some statement. They put stress in certain words to prove their point of view. Both groups are completely opposite in nature with this statement and sometimes it creates a tension and unpleasant environment. (Snyder, 34)

Many of the employees feel that Finnish language helps to adapt smoothly in their workplace. While lower percentage of employers agrees with this statement. Through the storytelling and observation, we can say that since employees are from foreign background and they need to make their status here in Finland, they believe Finnish language strongly helps to adapt smoothly in their workplace and in Finnish society. They are optimistic about their career in HJEX and they want to go in higher hierarchy through their experience and an adequate knowledge of Finnish language. They also believe that things would go smoother and would be easier to have conversation with other Finnish colleagues because of learning the languages. Through the interview and survey we found out that, most of the employers in HJEX speak English. Most of them don't feel the need of knowledge of Finnish language from their employee since it can be managed with English only. Though there are some exceptions where some employers stated through storytelling that learning of Finnish language from employee in HJEX would make the working environment more pleasurable.

According to survey, 52% of the employees end up with miscommunication in cross culture communication very often. And 40% of the employers agree with the statement. Miscommunication often leads to the wrong end results. According to Snyder, Finnish people are generally straight forward. They tend to avoid unnecessary conversation but always speak the facts and are up to the point. Finnish people always leave a space for their employee to speak their mind and they listen carefully. Most of the companies in Finland gives an access to communicate with all the people from management levels to their employees. This leads to clear understandings and better productivity. Though employees are hesitant to ask the question to their supervisor and manager and it leaves a room for error. (Snyder,35)

Through the data of survey, we can see that employers in HJEX have hard time to initiate a conversation comparing to their employees counterparts. 40% of the employees agree with the statement while the number is 60% for employers. This data actually proves the Finnish stereotypes that they are not eager to start a conversation but they will continue the conversation once the other starts it. Throughout the observation also we noticed that employers in HJEX generally create the atmosphere for communication without a urgent need but they will even start to crack a joke when employees are starting a conversation.

The results for the question “I am really straight forward while speaking” is actually surprising. Most of the previous data proved and stated that Finns are really straight forward while speaking. We feel that our limitations for the research led us to this different result than expected. Many of the participants felt that the questions are interesting but numbers of questions are more. And the fact that there is another similar questionnaire before as well, they lost the concentrations and got mixed up with the numberings. Below is the results for the respective statement.

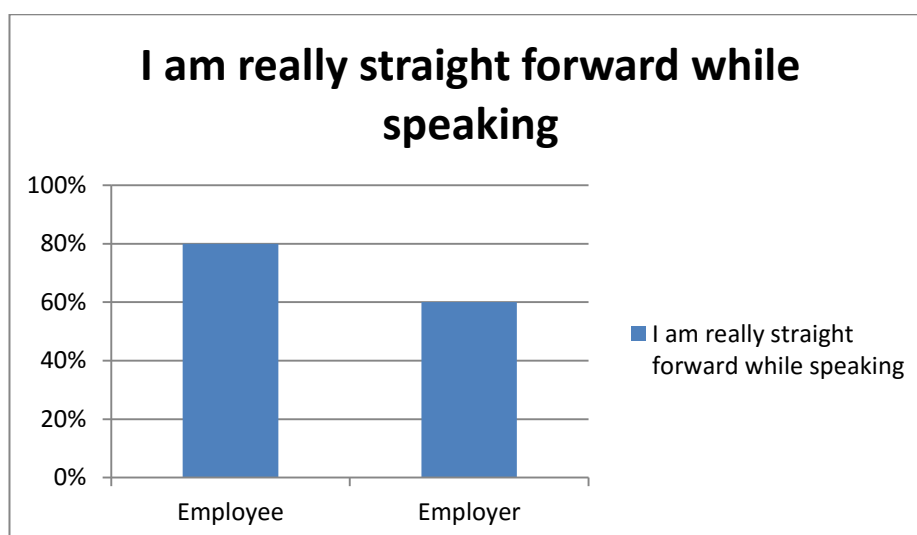


Figure 6: I am really straight forward while speaking

There is a huge difference in agreement level for the statement “I am able to know if people get understood/misunderstood by my speech.” Almost 90% of the employees in HJEX are confident that they can read the people through their behaviour. And only 40% of employers are confident about that. Through the storytelling and observation, we found out that there has been a case of misunderstandings and different outcome. Some of the employers are actually frustrated and had to go through difficult situation to solve the problem. The figure for the statement is illustrated below:

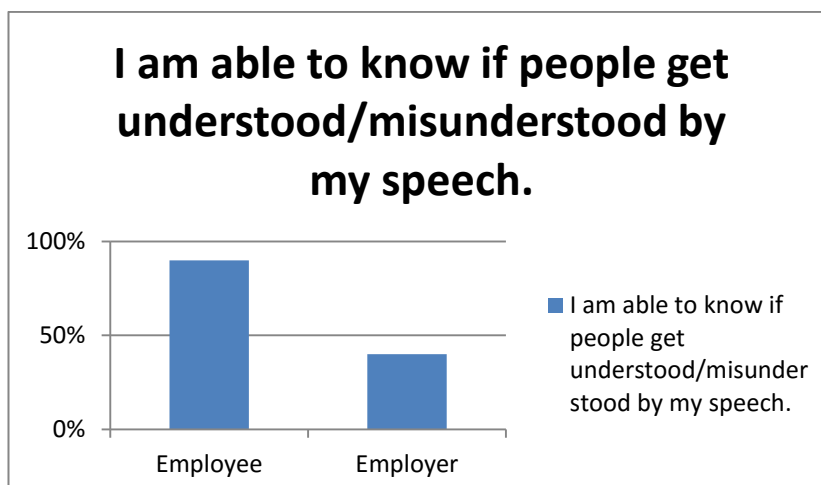


Figure 7: I am able to know if people get understood/misunderstood by my speech

The result for question “Nationality of other person affects my level of comfortability in communication” is quite similar for both groups. Level of disagreement with the following statement is around 60% for both groups. It indicates that majority of people in HJEX whether they are employee or employer, they are open to every other people. There are few percentage of people in employee who are neutral with the statement while all employers confident with their choice and neutral level is 0%. Considering the fact that all employers are Finnish and other results also indicates that Finnish people are straight forward with their mind and they don’t leave any space for confusion while communicating and expressing their mind.

The result for question “Speaker and receiver both are responsible for good communication” is totally similar with both groups. 94% of employee agrees with the statement while the percentage is 100% for employer. Finnish people speak in a soft tone express them in an etiquette manner. A Finnish person always give priority to the speaker and listen carefully and only raises the questions or interrupts when there is an urgent needs. It is important for others to learn such way when they are trying to adapt themselves in Finland. Our result in case company HJEX is totally satisfying and it implies that both groups understand each other in this aspect and there won’t be any conflicts with these issues in future.

#### 7.4 Survey results by age groups

Questionnaire were distributed in HJEX and collected. The results were divided into sections and one of them is related to age groups. The age groups were divided below 25 and above 25 of age. This division between age groups was to help us analyze if there are different outcomes between the two.

One of the questions showed a difference “learning Finnish language is important in your work place.” The agreeable percentage from two age groups were similar, below 25 63% and above 25 54%. The interesting finding, however, is the people who agreed more of disagreeing the question, below 25 27% and above 25 61%. There are more in above 25 that disagrees, which shows that they think that Finnish language is not as important in their workplace. The below 25 has a minor amount of disagrees get more agrees that Finnish is important to their workplace.

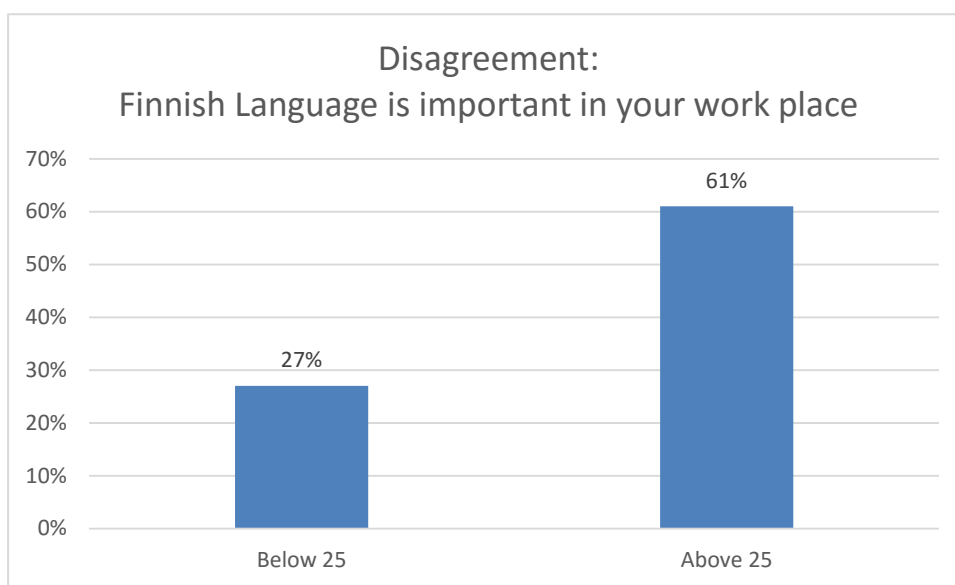


Figure 8: Finnish language is important in your work place

In the survey we asked about misunderstanding and if they know if someone understood/misunderstood your speech as well as if the participants themselves have been in “Lost in translation” situations. The results are quite fascinating as 54% of the below 25 and 51% of the above 25 agree that they have end up misunderstanding, meaning both groups has been in misunderstood yet both age groups are able to know if some understood them or not as both groups percentage rate was 80%. Below 25 scored 81% while above 25 had 82%. The chard below, however, shows “lost in translation” how people has been conversing yet ended up understanding entirely different. Though both groups are able to know if they are understood by their speech yet 62% of the above still has ended up being in lost translation while below has only 45% being lost.

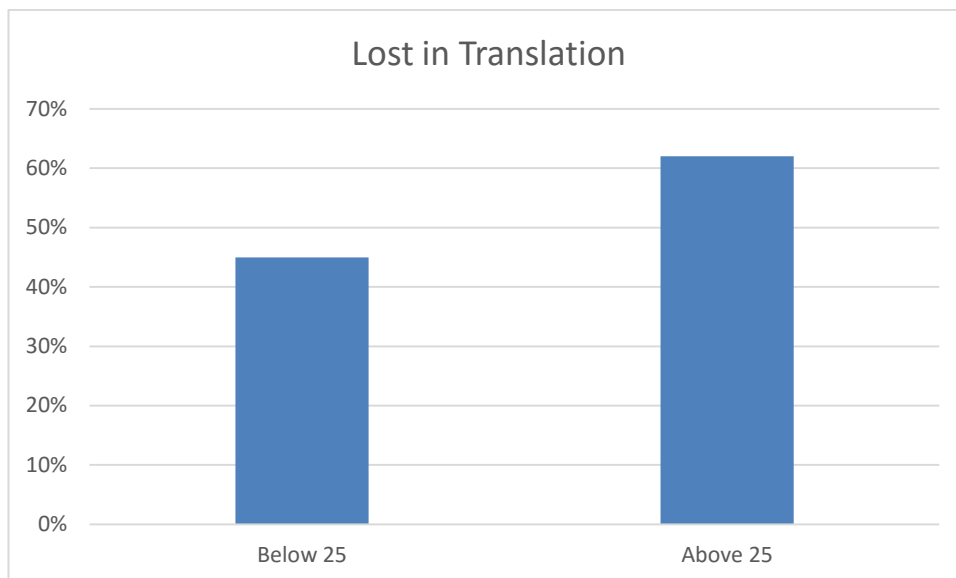


Figure 9: Lost in translation

The difference between the participant's comfortability with their own nationality and other nationality has similar result. Both age groups think that the other nationality do not affect their comfortability as well as their own nationality does not affect their comfortability towards others. As both age groups agree strongly we can conclude that both are relatively open to both their own and other nationality. This could also mean that all age groups in HJEX are rather sociable.

A heavily one-sided result was shown in both age groups. "Speaker and receiver both are responsible for good communication." All agree that speaker and receiver are responsible, where both are agreeing above 80%. Minor detail was below 25, 18% disagreed to this matter, while above 25 only had 3% disagreeing. A minor rate of 18% can be due to participants own behavior and by observation younger by age tend to be a little wilder.

## 8 Conclusion and suggestions

These are the following suggestions we have come up with considering the Finnish culture and the results we have gotten:

**Emphasize Finnish language:** Mostly employers in HJEX should encourage their employees to learn Finnish language. Though they provide a free Finnish language course for their employee, they didn't prioritize the importance of it to their employee for enrolling. As a result, less people showed up in their free Finnish class.

Maintain the pitch of voice: Mostly employees should consider the fact that they are in foreign country and need to try to adapt their working culture. Employers from foreign nationality maintain the pitch of tone according to the nature of conversation and sometimes it creates unnecessary chaos and unpleasant environment for working.

Employees should more clear and confident: Most of the misunderstandings in HJEX are the result of miscommunication. Especially the employees hesitate to question frequently to their employer and it often ends to wrong results. Employees need to understand that Finland is free of hierarchy level and all employees are free to express their views and question their supervisor or manager in need. Finnish people are spontaneous and never hesitate to answer the question in order to make a clear communication.

Employers should be more open to other culture: According to survey and research, employers in HJEX have a hard time to initiate a conversation. They need to break the stereotypes and be more open since this factor affects the productivity of company. Through the results of survey, we can see that employers in HJEX are more comfortable to communicate the people of their own nationality though this doesn't imply that they are rude or racist. They need to consider that lots of foreign workers are working in the company. And it actually helps if they break the ice and gets along with them. Since it creates a harmony and employees feel more comfortable.

Employees should accept and respect Finnish culture: Majority of the employees is immigrants in Finland. Once they get in working environment here, they need to understand the way of Finnish working culture and try to accept it instead of imposing their own culture.

## 8.1 Strength of Research

Use of both qualitative and quantitative method for thesis is our strength of research. Quantitative method for our research consists of survey through large number of people. Our case company is HJEX and correspondents' person consists of both employee and employer. Since one of us (Abhinav Gautam) has been working there since six consecutive years, it was way easier for us to make contact and to implement our steps. Also it helped us to conduct two interviews and survey with few employers and many employees. Our quantitative method of approach for our thesis helped us to get reliable precise and consistent data.

Qualitative method for our thesis consists of interviews, observation and focus groups. Strength of qualitative research for our thesis through interview is detailed information and

explanation of complex issues. Since we could conduct two interviews, it helped us to analyze the situation through different point of views. We had an opportunity of observation for multiple times. It happens often that data through survey and quantitative method might not show us actual situation. Opportunity of multiple observations led us to transparency.

The total outcome of our thesis includes hours of reading, constant meeting and teamwork and field work for research. The theory of thesis comes from selective book through the instruction of teachers and through selection of mutual consent. Our constant consultant with our thesis supervisor and implement of their guidance in each step made our thesis more effective and professional. Strengths of our research can be concluded with qualitative and quantitative method used, team work, constant guidance from thesis supervisor and intensive study for theoretical framework.

## 8.2 Limitation of Research

Though we had our strengths, there were limitations as well. The beginning of our research was slow because both of us had other plans. Abhinav Gautam has work and started a business in 2016, while Hammy Wong still had studies and was working full-time in her internship. These conflicted with our frequent meeting in the early year of 2016.

Other limitation of the research was gathering data. We had accumulated a fair amount of qualitative and quantitative data, however, we could have gotten more survey participants. Unfortunately, not everyone in the company of HJEX were willing to help. We had some encounters where people did not have time or did not want to help in answering survey or interview.

Relating to the survey, when gathering data, the answers limited the beginning of analysis. The rating for the survey was from 1 strongly disagree to 9 strongly agree. Most of the results ended up being neutral or close to neutral causing the analysis for gaps a little more limited. We could have done better in collecting more resourceful data by limiting the options of rating but only realized this during analyzing the surveys we have collected.

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## Figures

Figure 10: Hofstede's country comparison chart

<https://geert-hofstede.com/finland.html>

Figure 11: Asylum chart

[http://www.migri.fi/about\\_us/statistics/statistics\\_on\\_asylum\\_and\\_refugees/asylum\\_applicants\\_and\\_decisions\\_1990-1999](http://www.migri.fi/about_us/statistics/statistics_on_asylum_and_refugees/asylum_applicants_and_decisions_1990-1999)

Figure 12: Asylums Applicants in Finland 2012-2016

[http://www.migri.fi/about\\_us/statistics/statistics\\_on\\_asylum\\_and\\_refugees/asylum\\_situation\\_in\\_europe](http://www.migri.fi/about_us/statistics/statistics_on_asylum_and_refugees/asylum_situation_in_europe)

Figure 13: Question 1: Nationality of other persons affects my level of comfortability in communication. Question 8: I am only comfortable while communicating with people of my own nationality.

Excel

Figure 14: Pitch of voice should be considered while talking

Excel

Figure 15: I am really straight forward while speaking

Excel

Figure 16: I am able to know if people get understood/misunderstood by my speech

Excel

Figure 17: Finnish language is important in your work place

Excel

Figure 18: Lost in translation

## Tables

Table 1: Cross Tabulation Example

Appendices

Questionnaire sample

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please read the following statements carefully and rate it on the scale of 1-9 how strongly you agree or disagree it.

1- Strongly disagree

9- Strongly agree

No.	Question	Rate
1.	Nationality of other person affects my level of comfortability in communication.	
2.	Right choice of words and body language leads to good understandings.	
3.	Pitch of voice should be considered while communicating.	
4.	Learning Finnish language is important in your workplace.	
5.	Learning Finnish language strongly helps to adapt smoothly in your workplace	
6.	I end up with misunderstanding in cross culture communication very often.	
7.	I want to avoid communication with person of another culture.	
8.	I am only comfortable while communicating with people of my nationality.	
9.	Use of fancy word makes me a good speaker while communicating.	
10.	Sometimes I avoid communication even in need because I feel hard to initiate conversation.	
11.	I have been in a situation of "lost in translation." ( I explained to my employee/employer what I needed but the end result was completely wrong.)	
12.	I am really straight forward while speaking.	
13.	I am able to know if people get understood/misunderstood by my speech.	
14.	Speaker and receiver both are responsible for good communication.	
15.	Proper use of body language is necessary in good conversation.	

**HJEX Employer Interview Questionnaire**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Department:**

**Position:**

**1. What is your native country and language?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Do you have any experience of working in different country or in another culture?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. If yes then, does that working experience in another culture helps you to adapt an outsider here?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Any working culture from another country that fascinates you?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Describe your own idea how culture affects the working environment?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Are you familiar with any other languages besides your native one? Do you speak English as this is a multicultural company?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Do you often get difficulties in conversation with your employees because of language barrier?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Did different communicating styles, because of cultural influences, affected the working environment in your company?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**9. How did you overcome it?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**10. What are the benefits of intercultural communication in your opinion?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Any plans on the floor to implement in the near future to overcome demerits of intercultural communication?**

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_